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US court drops abuse images order

A US federal appeals court has withdrawn an order for the government to release images of detainee abuse.

Thursday's decision by the New York court came after the White House asked it to not to release the pictures, some of which were taken in Iraq and Afghanistan, amid concerns over reprisals against US forces overseas.



Images of abuse by US troops at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad caused outrage in Iraq [AP]

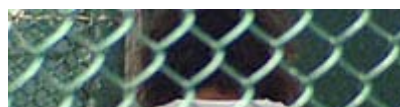
Officials say the photographs come from more than 60 criminal investigations between 2001-2006 and are of military personnel suspected of abusing detainees.

The court said it would withdraw the release order until the US supreme court has considered the case.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had spent years pursuing the government in the courts to obtain the pictures.

The US department of defence was to release the images by May 28 in response to legal action filed by the ACLU.

In depth



But Barack Obama, the US president, said the government would appeal the legal ruling ordering the release of the photos, in effect blocking their release.

- Video: Abuse 'unprecedented'
- Obama blocks abuse images

"The most direct consequence of releasing them, I believe, would be to further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger," Obama said in May.

"Moreover, I fear the publication of these photos may only have a chilling effect on future investigations of detainee abuse."

The ACLU said on Thursday it was disappointed by the ruling.

"It further delays the disclosure of photographs that are critical to informing the debate about the treatment of US prisoners," said ACLU lawyer Amrit Singh.

Source: Agencies